

Core Question 4: Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success?

The External Evaluation Performance Framework, outlined in Core Question 4, gauges if the school is providing the appropriate conditions for success. Core Question 4 consists of ten indicators designed to assess schools on curriculum and pedagogy, processes and systems for support and guidance, and climate.

4.1. Does the school have a high-quality curriculum and supporting materials for each grade?		
Indicator Targets	Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the sub-indicators.
	Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the sub-indicators.
	Meets standard	The school complies with and presents no concerns in the sub-indicators below.
4.1 Rating	The school <u>Meets Standard</u> on this indicator for 2013-14.	
Sub-Indicators	Sub-indicators	
	Curriculum aligns with state standards	
	Systematic reviews of curriculum are conducted to identify gaps based on student performance	
	Regular review of scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing	
	Sequence of topics across grade levels and content areas that are prioritized and focus on core learning objectives	
	Understanding and/or consensus amongst staff as to how the curriculum documents and related program materials are used to effectively deliver instruction	
	Programs and materials available to deliver the curriculum effectively.	

The school's curriculum and its work on that curriculum meet standard. It is aligned with the standards. Of the 52 unit plans reviewed, for example, one (1.9%) did not list the standards to which it was aligned. School personnel also review the curriculum to identify gaps based on student performance and to ensure that content is presented in appropriate time for testing.

For example, teachers keep extensive notes (diary mapping) on the effectiveness of their units and, with school leaders, review these notes periodically during the school year to drive revision of the curriculum.

School personnel regularly review the scope and sequence to ensure presentation of content in time for testing. As stated by one teacher, what is taught is “aligned to the testing schedule.” With materials available to deliver the curriculum effectively, teachers uniformly use them and other curriculum-related documents to effectively deliver instruction. Teachers stated that there are sufficient programs and materials to teach effectively.

Lastly, while the written curriculum does not make clear the school’s core learning objectives, school personnel are actively engaged in conversations at the department level about the most important learning. It was stated that departments discuss pacing and the most important skills that students need to learn in each respective content area.

4.2. Are the teaching processes (pedagogies) consistent with the school’s mission?		
Indicator Targets	Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the sub-indicators.
	Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the sub-indicators.
	Meets standard	The school complies with and presents no concerns in the sub-indicators below.
4.2 Rating	The school is Approaching Standard on this indicator for 2013-14.	
Sub-indicators	Sub-indicators	
	Curriculum is implemented in the majority of classrooms according to its design	
	Instruction is focused on core learning objectives	
	Pace of instruction/lessons and content delivery possesses the appropriate rigor and challenge	
	Instructional activities possess variety and/or use of differentiated strategies to engage a wide range of student interests, abilities, and learning needs	
	Sufficient feedback is provided on instructional practices	

Most lessons include appropriate standards-based objectives for the grade level of the students, and instruction is focused on meeting the objective. However, in some classroom observations the pacing allowed students more time than they needed, as evidenced by off-task behaviors and students finishing the assignment early. Also, in most classes, the instructional activities were teacher-centered (use of packets) with limited variety or differentiation strategies (usually whole-class discussion and note-taking or independent writing). Teachers discussed attempts to interest students by using popular culture, readings that reflect

students' backgrounds, examples from the teachers' personal lives, and use of visuals and music. This was observed but in very limited instances.

Students in several classes were observed to be not engaged in the work throughout the entire class period or for much of the class period. For those students engaged in the assignment, most teachers offered one-on-one feedback as they circled through the students' independent work time or through responses in the class discussion. However, because the teacher worked with students individually, this left little time to meet with every student during the class period. Several Instructional Aides were observed to be not working with students to help them learn content.

Staff receives sufficient feedback on instructional practices through frequent informal walk-throughs and formal reviews (SSOTs); however, staff commented in a focus group that they have to seek out the administrators for verbal feedback, which they find more helpful than the automatic e-mailed feedback.

4.3. For secondary students, does the school provide sufficient guidance on and support preparation for post-secondary options?		
Indicator Targets	Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the sub-indicators.
	Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the sub-indicators.
	Meets standard	The school complies with and presents no concerns in the sub-indicators below.
4.3. Rating	The school Meets Standard on this indicator for 2013-14.	
Sub-indicators	Sub-indicators	
	Students are prepared for rigorous post-secondary opportunities through challenging course work and rigorous job preparation programs (e.g., Advanced Placement courses, internships, independent study, industry certification programs)	
	High expectations exist to motivate and prepare students for post-secondary academic opportunities	
	Sufficient material resources and personnel guidance is available to inform students of post-secondary options	
	Opportunities exist for extracurricular engagement and activities (e.g., athletics, academic clubs, vocational) to increase post-secondary options	
	Meets or exceeds Indiana Core 40 graduation standard requirements	

Though only a middle school, Emma Donnan takes a number of steps to ensure that its graduates are college and career ready. The school presents challenging coursework, including the accelerated Cambridge Program and activities in the agricultural sciences (tied to FAA) to lay the foundation for comparable high school programs; the Cambridge cohort takes Algebra I to promote math achievement.

The school has high expectations for all students, emphasizing all, as evident from the multileveled intervention classes and consistent reference to meeting the needs of all students, and the guidance counselor sets personal goals to ensure that all students sign up for the 21st Century Scholars Program. The school also offered a College Go week, where students pledged to graduate with a Core 40 diploma and apply to at least one college program when they get to high school.

The school has sufficient material resources to support postsecondary academic opportunities, including a trained guidance counselor who accesses numerous free resources to engage students; for example, using the Drive of Your Life and Stay in to Win programs. The guidance counselor is supported by a vice principal and social worker to set student schedules and create graduation plans, discussing graduation requirements and various electives.

The school offers the full range of athletics for the middle school level, and offers additional clubs—even bussing students to Manual High School to engage them in the band program. Students/families mentioned that they would like to add choir and theater to the offerings, but the school was observed to meet all expectations of a middle school for promoting postsecondary success.

The school can strengthen its work by better integrating career exploration within classes and throughout the school year. While Drive of Your life offers students some exposure to career choices, the school might do more to hold career/college days and increase student exposure to role models of various backgrounds. This will help the school reduce stereotype threat and increase student engagement.

4.4. Does the school effectively use learning standards and assessments to inform and improve instruction?		
Indicator Targets	Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the sub-indicators.
	Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the sub-indicators.
	Meets standard	The school complies with and presents no concerns in the sub-indicators below.
4.4. Rating	The school <u>Meets Standard</u> on this indicator for 2013-14.	
Sub-	Sub-indicators	

indicators	Utilizes standardized and/or classroom assessments as accurate and useful measures of established learning standards/objectives
	Distributes assessment results to classroom teachers in a timely and useful manner to influence instructional decisions
	Selects assessments that have sufficient variety to guide instruction for a wide range of student learning abilities
	Uses assessments with sufficient frequency to inform instructional decisions effectively
	Uses assessment results to guide instruction or make adjustments to curriculum.

Emma Donnan appears to have a solid grasp of assessment and data-driven decision making, although this is one area that the school can continue to monitor and develop. The school meets all of the required components: The school uses assessments (NWEA/MAP, ECA/Acuity, plus additional online, unit, and teacher-made assessments).

The guidance counselor, curriculum resource teacher, student services coordinator, vice principal, and grants manager work as a leadership team to drive assessment and instructional growth. In addition to supporting teachers with the selection of screening/progress-monitoring assessments, instructional leadership coordinates its teacher-teams to make common assessments for their subject areas.

Assessment results are immediately accessible to teachers using the online NWEA system, and teachers are similarly informed via regular team meetings and subject team meetings. The assessments are able to capture student RIT scores and mastery of skills and standards, as well as their Lexile scores, providing meaningful data for a wide range of student abilities.

The “M Team” serves as an RtI team and also includes the social worker and principal; this team analyzes data and ensures that students receive proper interventions. There is regular use of student data—not only academic, but discipline, etc.—to drive schoolwide decisions and instructional decisions.

One strength of the team is its organization and variety of mechanisms to group students. One way to strengthen this work is to analyze the degree to which student performance on teacher-made assessments correlates with standardized assessments; also, to strengthen PLC discussion protocols to ensure that teachers build capacity to work with data independently and to ensure that root causes get addressed. The team can also better leverage data across non-instructional areas.

4.5. Has the school developed adequate human resource systems and deployed its staff effectively?		
Indicator Targets	Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the sub-indicators.

	Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the sub-indicators.
	Meets standard	The school complies with and presents no concerns in the sub-indicators below.
4.5. Rating	The school Meets Standard on this indicator for 2013-14.	
Sub-indicators	Sub-indicators	
	Hiring processes are organized and used to support the success of new staff members	
	A sufficient number of faculty and staff are deployed to maximize instructional time and capacity	
	faculty and staff are certified/trained in areas to which they are assigned	
	Professional development is related to demonstrated needs for instructional improvement	
	Professional development opportunities are determined through analyses of student attainment and improvement	
	Teacher evaluation plans are explicit and regularly implemented with clear processes and criteria	

The documents provided by the EMO show it has established—and the school follows—a highly organized hiring procedure that includes criteria for initial screening of candidates and at least two levels of interviews to further evaluate potential staff, including one with the principal. Leadership did not cite an emphasis on mock lessons as part of the interview process, and this might be a way to hire more seasoned staff with stronger instructional expertise.

Administrators say that the school leans heavily on novices from alternative route certification programs. Mindful of this, the administrators stress that they provide formal professional development (occurring about once a week, according to teachers and administrators interviewed) and informal coaching (by administrators, peers, or CRTs, also according to teachers and administrators) to support the teachers. The school-provided PD is based on needs uncovered during formal and informal classroom observations or discovered as a result of reviews of student achievement (or pre-test) data. They also note that many of their teachers take advantage of special training sessions offered by their alternative route programs.

Examination of the staff roster shows a deployment that appropriately reflects the needs of the school. Leadership has brought on new staff: an ESL teacher (as they see this population growing at the school) as well

additional SPED teacher specialists and several SPED instructional aides. Most staff are certified/trained in the areas to which they are assigned—often with master’s degrees or enrolled in degree programs; however, of the sample (n=16) reviewed via the Indiana Educator License Lookup, 88% held valid licenses, 6% held expired licenses, and 6% were not found in the database. Leadership sets an annual professional development (PD) plan and then modifies the basic framework based on data and observation to provide targeted PD for teachers.

Documents provided by the EMO show an explicit teacher-evaluation process with evaluation criteria, forms and procedures, scoring rubrics, and steps for teacher performance improvement planning; however, teachers did not seem to fully understand the process. Reviews regularly occur, according to written documentation and teacher feedback. One additional area to strengthen is the feedback loop—teachers described having to seek out administrators to obtain oral feedback (which they find very helpful) on class observations, rather than the administrators seeking out teachers to communicate feedback following observations.

4.6. Is the school’s mission clearly understood by all stakeholders?		
Indicator Targets	Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the sub-indicators.
	Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the sub-indicators.
	Meets standard	The school complies with and presents no concerns in the sub-indicators below.
4.6. Rating	The school Meets Standard on this indicator for 2013-14.	
Sub-indicators	Sub-indicators	
	Mission that is shared by all stakeholders	
	Stakeholders possess widespread knowledge and commitment to the intentions of the school’s mission	

School leadership defined the mission “to provide an education to our students that provides socio/emotional [support] and develops lifelong learners.” This mission was extended by school faculty, who highlighted that they are focused on “academics, behavior” and that they provide one-on-one attention and give students skills to participate in the 21st century.

Families highlighted “to engage 100% of the students” and administrative support teams offered similar ideas. Although the groups did not recite the same mission verbatim, they generally understood the school’s purpose and the priority for turnaround. What was stronger than a shared sense of mission was a shared

vision prominently posted on the wall near the main entrance and recited by teachers, leaders, and support staff alike: that the goal was to be the “model/top/#1 (urban) middle school in the state of Indiana.” This kind of messaging was strong among the Donnan community, and for that reason, reviewers believe that despite the team not being able to recite the mission verbatim, the diverse stakeholders contacted share a common purpose for the school.

Families were very supportive of the school and had sent numerous children to the school. One mother commended the school for appropriately disciplining her child; other parents said the school needs better PR so that more people in the community know what a positive change this is. Students verbally rated the school an 8–10, and staff shared the expectation that they would all return to work next year. One administrative support person literally teared up when speaking on behalf of the school leader.

Thus, even though the stakeholders do not share the same words when describing the school mission, reviewers believe that there is widespread knowledge and commitment to its intent. Reviewers do, however, encourage the Donnan team to further articulate a clear mission for the school that is tied to its vision of becoming a “model middle school,” so that shared understanding can be strengthened among stakeholders and promoted through the larger Indianapolis community to increase community support and enrollment.

4.7. Is the school climate conducive to student and staff success?		
Indicator Targets	Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the sub-indicators.
	Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the sub-indicators.
	Meets standard	The school complies with and presents no concerns in the sub-indicators below.
4.7. Rating	The school <u>Meets Standard</u> on this indicator for 2013-14.	
Sub-indicators	Sub-indicators	
	Rules are clearly stated and enforce positive behavior	
	Discipline approach possesses high expectations for student behavior	
	Interactions between faculty and students are respectful and supportive and faculty and students are clear about processes for resolution of conflicts	

Interactions between faculty and administration are professional and constructive

Emma Donnan Middle School has clearly stated rules that enforce positive behavior, using the STRIVE and a scholar merit/demerit system. The student and parent handbook focuses more upon prohibited behaviors, and this may be something for the school to strengthen. Still, teachers and families report comfort with the system, and teachers aim to use a 4:1 ratio of positive to negative feedback to motivate students. The behavior team cites that students are clear on what constitutes negative behavior and know how to earn points back, that expectations are consistent across teams, and that students get 5 opportunities to redirect and stay in the classroom.

The school also used several communications channels: handbooks, parent links, new student orientation (where they went over the policies and even had students take a test; this is repeated on Saturdays) to “teach the behaviors expected in school.” Behavior specialists cite the STRIVE program as a high standard for student behavior, but they add that expectations can be still higher. This is an area for growth as Emma Donnan progresses through turnaround. Observed interactions between faculty and students are respectful and supportive, and faculty and students are clear about processes for resolution of conflicts.

Families reported that they were comfortable with the school rules and consequences, and the behavior team reports that interactions between faculty and staff are positive, and “if a kid acts out, it’s not because he doesn’t respect the teacher.” The behavior team added that the faculty is working on building relationships with kids, but they don’t have bonding time; also that staff forget that they are in turnaround and sometimes how to interact with the students. The behavior team highlights, however, that faculty attend student sporting events, etc., and continue to work on classroom management. Faculty-administration relationships appear positive, and focus groups and interviews support this, describing the team as “content.”

4.8. Is ongoing communication with students and parents clear and helpful?		
Indicator Targets	Does not meet standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>two or more</u> of the sub-indicators.
	Approaching standard	The school presents significant concerns in <u>one</u> of the sub-indicators.
	Meets standard	The school complies with and presents no concerns in the sub-indicators below.
4.8. Rating	The school Meets Standard on this indicator for 2013-14.	
Sub-	Sub-indicators	

indicators	Communication is active and ongoing between the school and parents
	Communications utilized are both timely and relevant to parental concerns
	Communication of student academic progress and achievement is reported in a manner understood by parents
	Communication methods are designed to meet the needs of a diverse set of parents (e.g., communicating in parents' native languages, not communicating only in writing when many parents cannot read, holding meetings at convenient times for parents).

The school meets this standard in the area of communication with students and their parents. Emma Donnan has active, ongoing communication with its parents, and this communication is timely and relevant to parent concerns, which include the use of the Wednesday folder, which goes home each Wednesday with student work and announcements, and the monthly newsletter.

The school is working to ensure that all members of the school community, particularly the growing number of Hispanic families, get information in a manner best suited for them, such as ensuring that all information goes home to select parents in Spanish.

The school has made a practice of planning events at different times to ensure that parents with different work schedules can attend. Lastly, the school communicates effectively to parents about student academic progress and should be lauded for its student-led academic conferences.

4.9. Is there a high level of parent satisfaction?		
Indicator Targets	Does not meet standard	Less than 70% of parents surveyed indicate that they are satisfied overall with the school
	Approaching standard	More than 70% but less than 80% of parents surveyed indicate that they are satisfied overall with the school
	Meets standard	More than 80% but less than 90% of parents surveyed indicate that they are satisfied overall with the school
	Exceeds standard	At least 90% of parents surveyed indicate that they are satisfied overall with the school

4.9. Rating	The school was <u>Not Evaluated</u> on this indicator for 2013-14.
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In the end-of-year survey given to parents in the spring of 2013, 55.5% of parents surveyed (N=9) agreed with the statement, “My child is happy at [the] school.” However, only nine parents answered the question on this survey. In contrast, when focus groups were conducted with a random sampling of families, parents and students were overwhelmingly positive about the school, verbally rating the school an 8 or 9 out of 10, with minimal criticisms of the school. More information is required to adequately judge the performance of this school.

4.10. Is the school fulfilling its legal obligations related to access and services to students with limited English proficiency?		
Indicator Targets	Does not meet standard	The school is <u>not</u> fulfilling its legal obligations regarding ESL students, and requires substantial improvement in the sub-indicators below
	Approaching standard	The school is <u>not yet completely</u> fulfilling all of its legal obligations regarding ESL students, and requires <i>some</i> (but not considerable) improvement in the sub-indicators below
	Meets standard	The school <u>is fulfilling</u> its legal obligations regarding ESL students, and presents no concerns in the sub-indicators below
4.10. Rating	The school <u>Meets Standard</u> on this indicator for 2013-14.	
Sub-indicators	Sub-indicators	
	Appropriate staff have a clear understanding of current legislation	
	Research and effective practices relating to the provision of ESL services	
	Relationships with students, parents, and external providers that are well-managed and comply with law and regulation	

Emma Donnan Middle School is fulfilling its legal obligation regarding ESL students, based on review without file audit. The ESL staff demonstrates a clear understanding of current ESL legislation by identifying ESL students using the home language survey and placing ESL students using results from a placement test or the LAS Links assessment. ESL students are assessed annually to measure growth in language acquisition and changes in placement are made when necessary.



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The ESL staff demonstrates understanding of effective practices related to ESL services by providing accommodations and modifications within the general education classroom and language-specific instruction in a pull-out setting. Pull-out instruction extends beyond translation and covers content from the core subjects as well as general academic vocabulary. ESL staff have established positive teacher-parent relationships. Teachers communicate with parents regularly and provide school-related information to parents in their native language.